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The Radicalization of Democracy

Conflict, social movements and terrorism

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Abstract

The idea of democracy is being championed across the world, with some fifty new countries embracing this type of political system between 1974 and 2011 (Freedom House, 2016). Simultaneously, however, dissatisfaction has grown due to the perceived incapacity of democracy to deal with collective problems, hence the necessity to reconfigure it and redraw some of its principles. This paper links the analysis of the recent evolution of democratic systems with the trajectory of socio-political conflicts and the changing features of contemporary terrorism. It examines, therefore, two intertwined phenomena, namely the radicalization of democracy and the radicalization of the other. It concludes by stressing that encouraging dissent and heeding contentious claims made by social movements may be one way of mitigating both types of radicalization. Embedded in the tradition of critical criminology, this paper attempts to demonstrate that only by outflanking conventional categories of analysis can the criminological community aspire to grasp such thorny contemporary phenomena.

Introduction

Among individuals and groups there are relational dynamics which favour the establishment of restraint and encourage cooperative interaction. Such dynamics prevail in highly cohesive societies. However, relational dynamics may produce harmony or conflict, and in some cases lead to violent hostility in the form of organized political violence. The current international situation is characterized by a high degree of hostility, and the political violence we witness can be examined as action which influences, and is influenced by, the responses it receives. A form of 'joint action', the violence expressed by radicalized groups, regarded as a threat to democracy, cannot be broken down into the separate acts comprising it, namely the violence meted out by democracy.

Democracies are successful in defusing political violence when they produce individuals and groups capable of acting as the whole community of which they are a part (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1998). By contrast, they are unsuccessful when they inspire individuals and groups to pursue completely different social orders. This is when two forms of radicalization may start confronting each other, respectively engaged in forcefully (and often illegitimately) imposing their systems of values and practices. 'Off-shore' democracies, discussed below, are major participants in this confrontation and seem to be shaped by a crisis of hegemony leading them to suspend the rules to which they, nevertheless, claim loyalty. Religious extremism expressed by Islam, a specific form of radicalization also addressed in this paper, is the other participant, and expresses itself through what will be termed mimetic violence. A social force that could temper

destructive confrontation emanates from social movements, whose revitalization, given their aversion to the violence exercised by both state and non-state agents, is necessary. The analysis below should be located in the wide realm of critical criminology, whose sensibility and analytical categories transcend conventional tools commonly employed when addressing law and order.

In the following section a depiction is attempted of the features characterizing off-shore democracies.

Off-shore democracies

Secrecy characterizes many operations conducted by contemporary global elites, in the economic as well as in the political realm (Urry, 2014). The term 'off-shore', applied to the range of financial irregularities that allow the hiding of wealth (Ruggiero, 2017), can also describe contemporary mechanisms of democratic decision-making and practices, which in turn are increasingly 'hidden' from public scrutiny. Let us delineate the process leading to the establishment of off-shore democracies.

Empirical theories of democracy tend to focus on existing models, so that they end up endorsing the status quo as the most preferable arrangement. Inspired by a sense of 'realism', such theories jettison suggestions of improvement, let alone of alternative models, treating them as idealistic, empirically inadequate or 'unreal' (Held, 2006). However, the performance of 'real' democratic systems cannot be dissociated from the evaluation expressed by those who experience the functioning of such systems. Civil society, for instance, may not limit its action to the periodical expression of voting preferences, but is likely to put forward demands and, in so doing, exercise a form of surveillance or vigilance over institutional decisions. A public sphere distinct from the state apparatus, in other words, constitutes a key component of what we ought to understand for democracy. Democratic decision making, in brief, can be accomplished through political action from below.

'In the historical evolution of democratic regimes, a circuit of surveillance, anchored outside state institutions, has developed side by side with the institutions of electoral accountability... democracy develops with the permanent contestation of power' (Della Porta, 2013: 5).

Non-state aggregations, including independent media and professionals, pressure groups, non-governmental organizations and social movements have traditionally played such a surveillance function. The latter, in particular, as relevant actors and purveyors of collective needs and sentiments, express implicit judgments on elites and their activity. What distinguishes democratic systems is their specific capacity to respond to such judgments or, to put it differently, their ability to deal with contentious politics.

Not all politics is contentious, as it commonly consists of elections, consultation, ceremony and bureaucratic process (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). Social movements, instead, do express contentious politics when they make 'contained' and/or 'transgressive' claims, namely when demands are put forward through well-established means and/or through innovative means.

Ultimately, democracy distinguishes itself from other regimes in that its elected political agents should be able to interact with challengers, with new political entities and their innovative collective action (Tilly, 2004; 2007). Democracies, in brief, can be classified on the basis of the elasticity of their structures and the degree to which they encourage political processes and social dynamism leading to change (Ruggiero and Montagna, 2008).

This classification was proposed by some among the very founders of classical political thought, with Machiavelli (1970), for instance, identifying as corrupt those systems which proved unable to deal with tumults and other forms of troubling dissent. Contention, including violent contention, Machiavelli argued, causes no harm, particularly when the elite, through changes in social arrangements and legislation, defeats the corrupt elements within itself. Livy's history suggests that the absence of corruption was the reason why the numerous tumults that took place in Rome 'did no harm, but, on the contrary, were an advantage to that republic' (Bull, 2016: 35).

Democracies can claim that they are concerned with the pursuit of harmony and public wellbeing, but as Dewey (1954) argued, they can hardly claim that their acts are always socially beneficial. For instance, one the most regular activities of democracies is waging war.

'Even the most bellicose of militarists will hardly contend that all wars have been socially helpful, or deny that some have been so destructive of social values that it would have been infinitely better if they had not been waged' (ibid: 14).

Democratic political acts, therefore, may be presented as socially beneficial, even when their anti-social nature prevails. This is why citizens, Dewey warned, should be cautious in identifying their community and its interests with politically organized institutions and theirs. While launching this warning, Dewey approached an embryonic notion of social movement, stressing that the recognition of the harm caused by states on behalf of the public leads the public itself to institute its own sphere of action with the purpose of conserving and expanding its interests. Democracies striving to achieve unity, on the other hand, may do so only by imposing intellectual uniformity and 'a standardization favourable to mediocrity' (ibid: 115). They tend to regiment opinions and respond to difference with astonishment or punishment: mass production is not confined to the factory but covers ideas, an argument that led Dewey to identify a process of 'eclipse of the public'. While the political candidate, with 'his firm jaw and his lovely wife and children' (ibid), prepares to make decisions, he also breeds indifference if not contempt. We are faced, here, with a crisis of politics as seen around a century ago, when the public grew apathetic, bewildered, barred from expressing its opinion or dissent.

In brief, off-shore democracies are unable to deal with political contention, to interact with challengers, to accept contestation, and to submit choices to collective assessment and deliberation. They testify to a crisis of politics that pushes them in the direction of increasing secrecy. Crucial decisions affecting all are made in closed enclaves impervious to popular control.

Intolerance and political de-skilling

Intolerance towards dissent constitutes one of the major manifestations of today's crisis of politics, which hampers the possibility of collective action, denies space for negotiation between rulers and ruled, and ultimately prevents human communities from representing themselves as agents of their own history (Balibar, 2016). In this sense, the very notion of citizenship is 'under siege and reduced to impotence', while democratic systems take on a 'pure' form, namely they become capable of dealing exclusively with their own logic and the mechanisms of their own reproduction (ibid: 12). Individuals and groups, as a consequence, are expelled from their place in the world (Sassen, 2014).

While reducing the opportunities for participatory forms of action, contemporary democracies simultaneously expand the sphere of delegation. Thus, the electoral process becomes increasingly influenced by private interests expressed through the initiative of donors and lobbyists. Soliciting bribes is now termed 'fundraising' and bribery itself 'lobbying', while bank lobbyists 'shape or even write the legislation that is supposed to regulate their banks' (Graeber, 2013: 114).

While participation is discouraged, enclaves of political and economic power become increasingly unreceptive to the moods and needs of citizens. These enclaves constitute forms of 'off-shore democracies', in the sense that the dynamics of their action, the procedures of their decision-making and their very capacity to make decisions affecting all are hidden from the electorate. This leads to a process of political de-skilling of the electorate, who grows impotent, disillusioned and, again, apathetic.

Lack of participation marks the simultaneous decline of deliberative practices, namely those processes leading to the formation of opinions in interaction with others. These practices characterize social movements and the way in which their horizontal communication produces tolerance for the other and acceptance of diversity. The shift in institutional responses to social movements, looking at purely technical factors, proves how this communicative process is being hampered. Protest raises military responses, aided by crowd-control techniques such as 'kettling' or 'coralling'. The former is a metaphor likening the containment of protesters to the containment of heat and steam within a kettle, and consists in the encircling of demonstrators and their subjugation through forced immobility. To avoid allusions to military confrontation, however, the latter term is used, which refers to the practice of enclosing animals and restricting the territory they occupy. Demonstrators so 'kettled' or 'coralled', being denied access to food, water and toilet facilities, are unlikely to fight and defy batons or electrified 'battle-prods'. Often, growing tired after hours of being surrounded, they may just ask to go home. In some cases, the 'kettling' takes place well before the agreed location is even reached by protesters, who are locked at bus or train stations and physically prevented from joining the demonstration. Regarded as a violation of human rights, this technique and its military corollary increase the cost of protest, eliciting feelings of injustice and, therefore, at times strengthening the willingness to participate.

Certainly, the militarization of crowd control is perhaps a constant feature of democracies, which have often found it particularly hard to recognize the right to demonstrate and to negotiate with demonstrators. This feature, however, has gained novel prominence with the transformation of public into private space,

whereby demonstrators are seen as perturbers of the smooth running of business, enemies of consumers and deniers of their 'human right' to shop. Idle demonstrators had better evacuate private spaces, because they do not count, they are neither consumers nor labour force. The philosophy behind this shift is found in the paradoxical idea that, in countries where dissent is permitted, there is no need to dissent: on the contrary, it is in countries where opposition is banned that protest is justified. Hence the disingenuous claim that regime change, carried out through the invasion of undemocratic countries, is aimed at providing their inhabitants with the right to protest.

Off-shore forms of government, militarization and massive presence of police officers, transforming public spaces into war zones, are signs of the radicalization of democracy, a process also taking place at the international level.

In the name of freedom

'Anxious Dictators and Wavering Democracies' was the title of a recent report published by Freedom House (2016). In the report, the US and Europe were described as struggling to cope with international events, particularly unresolved regional conflicts. Their role in exacerbating such conflicts was not explicitly mentioned, although both their action and inaction were said to have 'generated unprecedented numbers of refugees and incubated terrorist groups that inspired or organized attacks on targets abroad' (ibid: 1). 'Wavering democracies' were accused of responding to such issues through the development of populist campaigns and the adoption of security measures that run counter the core values of free societies. Displaying lack of self-confidence, democracies were said to fuel xenophobic feelings, creating a climate in which attacks of facilities hosting refugees, the erection of fences and the creation of draconian laws become legitimized.

'In effect, the European establishment's inability to manage these new challenges – on top of the lingering economic woes that began nearly a decade ago – gave fresh impetus to those who have questioned the European project and the liberal, universal values that it represents' (ibid: 2).

Intolerant policies were implemented in the name of patriotism and the draconian measures adopted against the 'intruders' were echoed by violent strategies of law enforcement and crowd control against all dissenters.

The radicalization of democracy at the international level also entails the formation of a planetary oligarchy and the concentration of the world resources, along with the promotion of values and principles justifying them. The word freedom, for instance, has been appropriated by those who deny it to the other, namely right-wing, xenophobic parties springing across Europe, so that a concept purportedly belonging to the democratic tradition is being used to destroy that tradition.

Recent invasions, illegal wars, torture, kidnappings, the use of prohibited weapons and the killing of civilians have been perpetrated in the name of this type of freedom. Similarly, the mercenary-state partnerships and their destructive activities have been justified through the benefit they are bound to

produce for the establishment of global liberty. With drones and homicide missions, democracies can assassinate people on the secret orders of heads of state, and 'for a highly targeted death (say, a gang chief) there are on average nine collateral victims' (Badiou, 2016: 60). More than collateral damage, these assassinations amount to deterrence addressed to entire populations.

The radicalization of democracy is a response to a crisis of hegemony, when rules are suspended or eliminated and open 'wars of manoeuvre' are waged against internal and external enemies (Jessop, 2016). The process triggers the creation of 'deep states', namely hidden auxiliary power networks that supplement the 'off-shore' democratic entities mentioned above. Democracy, in this way, arms itself with the very forces that threaten it (Todorov, 2014). Openness, moderation and temperance are replaced by excess, hubris and feelings of omnipotence, while freedom and free enterprise intertwine with military missions which, rather than engaging in the arduous task of establishing states, simply destroy states (Badiou, 2016). The enjoyment of rights is polarized, setting freedom of enterprise against freedom to remedy entrepreneurial social harm, freedom to establish political agendas against freedom to oppose them, freedom to engage in war against freedom to demonstrate against it.

The radicalization of democracy takes on the nature of an auto-immune disorder that threatens the life of contemporary societies and the legal systems that underwrite them. The war on terror is, therefore, akin to slow suicide, as societies attempting to protect themselves, in fact, destroy the defensive mechanisms that are supposed to guarantee their survival. 'Repression – whether it be through the police, the military, or the economy – ends up producing and regenerating the very thing it seeks to disarm' (Derrida, 2003: 99). Radicalized combatants are, thus, doubly suicidal, as they incorporate two suicides in one: their own and the suicide of the radicalized democracies they fight.

In brief, the militarization of internal conflict and the transformation of domestic public spaces into war zones are accompanied by a parallel process occurring at the international level. Here, intolerance is expressed through illegal invasions, the use of prohibited techniques and practices, secretive homicide missions, and the transformation of international public spaces into global war markets.

The nihilism of the excluded?

An analysis of religious extremism imputed to Islam cannot neglect the background broadly depicted. In the West, the phenomenon has been examined as a corollary of social exclusion: extremists are said to come from the poorest and rundown parts of cities, where youth are raised in large housing estates and where trouble flares up periodically. Accounts illustrate the fractured lives of young second-generation migrants, their alienation, exclusion, family size, poverty and disrupted upbringings. Some traverse the pathways from home to care and from crime to prison, struggle within the education system, and display all the 'predictors of criminal behaviour' (Walklate and Mythen, 2016: 337).

Radicalization of young people may be generated by individual psychological factors, but also by collective animosity against injustice and power. From the

area of psychology, for instance, research studies have focused on the processes leading to terrorism, conceptualizing the terrorist act as the final step on a narrowing staircase (Moghaddam, 2005). These processes are said to involve individuals who believe they have no voice in society, and in cases of suicidal terrorism to be encouraged by a 'significance quest' accompanied by various ideological reasons (Victoroff and Kruglanski et al, 2009). One of the causes identified in the literature is the feeling of 'weakness, irrelevance, marginalization and subordination experienced by Muslim people', combined with the memory of a glorious past of a great transnational civilization (Toscano, 2016: 123). The 'reactionary utopia' of the Caliphate is explained in these terms, namely as the result of frustration determined by the gap between expectations and achievement. The frustration thesis seems to apply to both prevailing models of terrorism: 'the fanatic who is outside any appeal to rationality, and the calculating actor who lacks any capacity for human empathy' (McDonald, 2013: 11). Authors advocating the 'new terrorism' model emphasize its pathological aspects, arguing that participants suffer from personality disorder and mental unbalance. On the other hand, terror has also been associated with the search for redemption, with protagonists neither 'fanatic' nor 'calculating', but just enacting redemptive violence that transforms and 'saves' at the same time (Weisbrod, 2002).

Purely structural approaches to the issue, on the other hand, may be insufficient to explain the process: 'It is erroneous to presume that material deprivation works in a simple and/or straightforward manner in relation to the propensity to commit violence' (Walklate and Mythen, 2016: 338). True, radicalization takes place when a considerable cultural and relational distance, along with severe forms of inequality and injustice, exist between the parties involved. But to claim that inequality and social injustice are the main causes of terrorism neglects the fact that there is no terrorism in the fifty countries listed by the United Nations as the poorest, least developed, most unjust and unequal. As Sen (2015: 165) has argued,

'The simple thesis linking poverty with violence is empirically much too crude both because the linkage of poverty and crime is far from universally observed, and because there are other social factors... Calcutta is not only one of the poorest cities in India – and indeed in the world – it so happens that it also has a very low crime rate' (ibid: 165).

In radicalized democracies, the young immigrants do not join terrorist networks out of existential vacuum or mere marginalization, but from resentment born of the humiliation suffered by people to which they feel close. While their parents chose where to live and partly maintained the culture of their country of origin, the young distanced themselves from that culture without acquiring a new one: 'the danger that ruins life in the poor districts is not Islam or multiculturalism... it is deculturation' (Todorov, 2014: 168). 'Deculturation' is one of the characteristics of radicalized democracies, which are based on a winner-take-all logic whereby the losers are left with no place to occupy. Becoming extremist, in this situation, amounts to 'pure and simple regression that offers a mixture of sacrificial and criminal heroism' (Badiou, 2016: 56).

Scholars in the area of theology, however, have attempted to find in sacred texts the cause of contemporary terrorism. For example, charting the history of the Islamic State since its first incarnation in the seventh century, the following *Hadith* (a prophesy emanating from Muhammad) has been highlighted. Widely accepted among Sunni Islamists, the prophecy states that the history of the *Umma* (the Muslim international community) will go through five phases: first, the Prophet himself will rule; then Caliphs will rule according to the Prophet's teachings; then force will be necessary for those teachings to spread; later, coercive rules will be established; finally, the time of caliphate will return and usher in the end of the world (Kennedy, 2016; Small, 2016). The Caliph, it should be specified, is not only the representative of the Prophet but also of God: he is God on earth (Adonis, 2016). Radical Islam, according to this reading, constantly recycles the remains of the past because it is in the past that its future is believed to lie. This notion of 'frozen time' finds ideal reception in traditional mindsets, characterized by 'following' rather than 'questioning': believers, in other words, are asked to simply repeat and reproduce the truths of revelation. Radical critics contend that, historically, Islam was founded on tribalism, anger for conquest and the power of money. It was imposed by force, therefore violence was its original major component.

'In the foundational text, those who disbelieve in the communications of Allah shall have a severe chastisement... We shall make them enter fire; so oft as their skins are thoroughly burned' (ibid: 39).

Prayers may solicit God to erase unbelievers from the earth, so that murder, inevitably, becomes sacred. A certain reading of the Revelation conveys the notion that the Prophet of the Muslims is the ultimate prophet, that he speaks definitive truths, and that humans have nothing more to say or to add. In turn, 'God has nothing more to say or to add to what He has already formulated because He has said His last word to His last Prophet' (ibid: 57).

Challenging causations derived from foundational texts, other scholars have underlined how the Quran is replete with suggestions around dialogue, peace and the development of harmonious interfaith relationships. There are many passages in the Quran, according to other authors, that destroy the idea, propagated by some, that non-Muslims are infidels and must be eliminated (Horkuc, 2009; Wills, 2016). Finally, the argument has been made that not Islam, but religion in general has always played a role in war and terrorist violence, even in advanced secular countries (Buc, 2015; Sacks, 2015; Hassner, 2016). International conflict in general is being 'theologized', as wars and military interventions, led by the Judeo-Christian West in the name of noble causes, are also, from a certain perspective, wars of religion (Derrida, 2002).

In his unceremonious analysis, Badiou's (2016: 42) sees in contemporary terrorism 'fascist armed gangs with a religious tinge', arguing that religion has always provided a rhetorical cover for violent gangs: Franco's thugs were blessed by priests, and even the mafia 'professes a punctilious Catholicism' (ibid: 43). It could also be added that Blair's warmongering was one of the outcomes of his conversion to Catholicism. Religion, death and sacrifice have often developed into the cult of martyrdom, and contemporary suicide bombers are just the latest example of this development originating from political or religious beliefs

(Barlow, 2016). On the other hand, joining terrorist networks, whether through religious belief or not, is the final stage of the construction of a nihilist subjectivity, prompted by the desire for revenge and destruction and coupled with subtle alienated imitation. Nihilist subjectivities, in Badiou's view, incorporate a 'desire for the West: the desire to possess, to share in what is represented, what is vaunted everywhere as the luxury of the West' (ibid: 48-49).

Revenge and destruction, however, are formalized through the mythology of tradition, as it is often the case in liberation struggles. The parallel may be illuminating. The history of anti-colonization gives several examples of how national struggles aim at liberating peoples from external oppressors as well as from the internal effects of that oppression. Traditional local elites in colonies were formed of individuals who mediated foreign rule, negotiated or accommodated demands, 'making the best of a difficult and often humiliating relationship' (Walzer, 2015: 2). These elites offering liberation were likely to be regarded with suspicion, and forced to accept nationalist claims.

Even Gandhi was deeply opposed to many aspects of Hindu culture, especially the fate of the untouchables. He was assassinated by someone committed to a more literal, or more traditional, or perhaps more radically nationalist version of Hinduism' (ibid: 4).

Liberation entails forms of traditionalism, and the achievement of independence may witness the growth of anti-modernization sentiments as a weapon against the oppressor. While Fanon (1965) was celebrating the birth of the 'new Algerian', fundamentalism was already beginning its political counterrevolution. Religion was used by leaders as a tool for their immediate purpose: creating political unity in the anticolonial struggle, but resentment brewed among groups of people who disliked 'those secularizing and modernizing elites, with their foreign ideas, their patronizing attitudes, and their big projects' (Walzer, 2015: 26). Real liberators, in sum, were expected to set past and future glory against present humiliation, and to display their 'alterity' from the enemy in the form of the martyrdom they were prepared to endure. The struggle, therefore, was not simply inspired by the desire of independence, but also by the necessity to destroy the ancient enemy, the members of alien faiths, the infidels.

The type of violence ascribed to radicalized Islam, however, contains some additional, original elements.

Mimetic violence

The formation of nihilist networks today, while pursuing the destruction of ancient enemies, aims at constructing commercial power: Isis sells petrol, gas supplies, artworks, cotton, arms, slaves, women (Badiou, 2016; Adonis, 2016). That all organizations, including non-state entities, engage in commercial initiatives should not be surprising in a world that preaches freedom of enterprise and the accumulation of profits. When organizations resort to acts of terror, however, we may presume they feel that they have no space left for peaceful interaction. For example, the invasion of a country may be followed by

resistance in the form of terrorist acts, while terrorist acts may determine responses of a terrorist (extra-*legem*) nature by states. Moreover, invasions may destabilize regimes and trigger sectarian violence. It is estimated, incidentally, that over thirty per cent of the founders of Isis are former members of the secret services of Iraq, who enact a form of revenge, responding to the invasion of their country with indiscriminate attacks (Lynch, 2015; Gerges, 2015). This imitative dynamic leads us to other considerations.

If the context in which political violence is performed is itself violent, an escalating process allows the parties involved to devise increasingly violent practices. Such practices take on the nature of terrorism when violence becomes random and organizations using it adopt a concept of collective liability applied to the groups against which they fight. Targets are not precise actors whose conduct is deemed wrongful, but general populations defined by nationality, ethnicity, religious or political creed. Terrorism as 'pure' violence contains elements of what is known as hate crime, that is a perception that the victims are representatives of specific communities, and that they are not attacked in their capacity as individuals, but as individuals belonging to a real or imagined alien group. Both terrorism and anti-terrorism may choose 'pure' forms of violence, in an imitative process that rapidly becomes war-like (Witte, 1996; Black, 2004; Ruggiero, 2006).

Terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism are linked in this causal chain that exhibits feud-like elements of vengeance, each side answering random violence with random violence. This causal chain is also detectable in the very structure that organizations are assuming. The radicalization of democracy, in other words, determines not only the proliferation and higher intensity of attacks, but also the organizational structure through which these are carried out.

Non-state violent organizations must, by definition, adopt clandestine structures, although the model with which they present themselves may vary according to contexts and in response to institutional action (Beck, 2015). In situations where popular support is widespread, terrorist groups may set up dual structures composed of an official, legitimate layer of activists and a hidden nucleus of combatants waging armed attacks. This dual structure seems to survive as far as terrorist organizations maintain strong links with social movements and perceive themselves as representatives of aggrieved groups (Combs, 2013; Martin, 2010). Lack of support from such groups who express their contentious politics through visible social movement activity often determines the collapse of terrorist groups (Ruggiero, 2010). On the other hand, repression of social movements, which characterizes radicalized democracies, weakens the tempering function such movements may exercise, leading to spiraling and senseless violence.

Radicalized Islamic groups have evolved over the last two decades following international events and the intensification of institutional responses. In the 1990s, for instance, hard-core militants prevailed in organizations which displayed a high degree of professionalism and role differentiation. The distance between leaders and adherents was kept to a minimum, and all participants were tasked with specific operations that they were well able to carry out due to expertise and appropriate skills. Recruitment was selective and based, among other things, on proven ideological loyalty, military expertise, possession of resources, range of reliable followers, status and available key contacts. The

prevailing model was, therefore, one that echoed the old international political organizations, with a central committee dictating the 'line', establishing the goals, identifying possible allies and drawing a short-term as well as a long-term strategy. The latter, of course, was the attainment of power, pursued through the building of strong links among participants, supporting social groups and their allies.

This structure, which hosts members operating according to the principles of 'authoritarian centralism', was slowly supplemented by the creation of cellular units more or less coordinated among themselves and with increasingly weaker links with the central structure. The radicalization of democracy contributed to this evolution, as the 'enemy' was isolated and kept at increasing distance from civil society and its contentious expressions. The increase in social and relational distance from collective feelings and aggrieved groups forced organizations into the interstices of discontent, in an attempt to gather the 'detritus' left behind by social, cultural and political polarization. Violence is less destructive where the adversaries are closer in social space, a principle of which radicalized democracies may be aware but prefer to exploit with the aim of turning more or less defensible causes into delirious destruction. Radicalized democracies created drastic ruptures and imposed on its enemies a redefinition of themselves along with a radical reshaping of their strategy. This process is similar to that accompanying the criminalization of social movements, that leads in equal measure to some participants abandoning the fight and some choosing clandestine action. A scale shift was produced, whereby ascending violence was met with harsher exemplary punishments and spectacular retaliation. In response, violent groups launched yet higher levels of threats and deployed more spectacular violence (Tilly, 2004).

Attacks by scattered cells started to follow a 'logic' rather than an established 'programme', with copycat action being conducted in contexts which were diverse and isolated from one another. Communication among terrorist cells, in brief, began to revolve around the symbolic nature of the destructive act, a form of signature indicating a common identity. Such terrorist cells, which are still operating now, are devoid of an international reach, but become international thanks to the images they furnish, the imagination they stimulate and the repetitions they encourage. 'Violence increasingly seeks excess and rupture rather than organization and programme' (McDonald, 2013: 168).

However, there is more than 'excess and rupture': when the choice of targets can no longer be justified by the specific social goal pursued, it is given a transcendental justification that can be termed *historical*. Some political conflicts emphasize history, while others emphasize humanity. The emphasis on history destroys all limits to human action, because history itself will be the supreme judge of the morality of that action (Camus, 1965). It should be noted that radicalized democracies mobilize the same sort of historical justification, as they too claim that the future will vindicate the legitimacy of their limitless and randomized violence (Ruggiero, 2006).

In the current phase, the development of 'networks of cells' seems to constitute the prevailing trend. The core structure, of course, remains and is now located in specific territories acquired by a military force, while peripheral entities are scattered and offer their support in a variety of fashions. Isis is said to adopt Mao's revolutionary warfare strategy, based on the formation of an

irregular army. But while for Mao this army relied mainly on peasants, for Isis it avails itself of the expertise of jihadists from previous conflicts mixed with professional soldiers and intelligence personnel (Whiteside, 2016). Isis has conducted dozens of prison breaks, freeing thousands of veterans, while some 20,000 inmates were released between 2008-2010 in rudderless countries afflicted by civil war. This constitutes, perhaps, a major pool of potential recruits, an army born of chaos held by those in command through a vertical apparatus and functional bureaus. This organizational form is copied largely from al Qaeda, is financially self-sufficient, media savvy, and kept together by a strong leadership.

At the same time, small groups of individuals may just plan and execute attacks which seem to be consistent with the strategy of the core organization, with or without the prior assent or a post-facto endorsement by the core organization. Recruitment may spread and attract also young women who are prepared to become spouses of combatants in the regions where the organization rules. New combatants may also be recruited from the large repository of aggrieved Muslims resident in most western countries, as we have seen. In brief, it no longer seems that terrorism can be imputed to a single, however loosely, organized group. Along with hierarchical organizations, there are bands of followers who act outside formal structures and

‘are motivated by feelings and beliefs widely shared among millions of Muslims worldwide.... The independence of the attacks in Madrid (2004), London (2005) and Mumbai (2008) from Al Qaeda control or direction is a vivid demonstration’ (Blum and Heymann, 2010: 162).

Radicalized democracies and the radicalized others activate their respective hidden networks and tools, the former choosing illegal forms of annihilation of the enemy, the latter mobilizing the fragmented groups and identities forced to a clandestine existence. Repression may push dissent underground, but may fail to destroy the informal networks and the social relationships through which identities are structured. Extreme repression, moreover, reduces the variety of points of reference for aggrieved groups, selecting the most extreme among them. This is when state agents can blend elements of warfare with those of criminal justice, thus responding to the radicalization they have created. Although at times radical violence may appear to be an unpredictable outburst or unexplainable explosion, it possesses a ‘geometrical precision’. It occurs when the social geometry of a conflict is violent.

‘Every form of violence has its own structure, whether a beating structure, dueling structure, lynching structure, feuding structure, genocide structure – or terrorist structure. Structures kill and maim, not individuals or collectivities’ (Black, 2004: 15).

Deliberative democracy and transgression

It is time to identify some of the social forces that can temper the two types of radicalization discussed.

Does repression reduce radicalization by raising the cost of participation in violent action? A study investigating the effect of different types of repression found that closing off nonviolent avenues of dissent boosts group grievances and increases participation in violence. Targeting specific violent groups, on the other hand, proved to yield no discernible effect on violence. The study focused on 'patterns of terrorism' in 149 countries for the period 1981 to 2006 (Piazza, 2017).

The argument presented so far is that as forms of government become increasingly elitist, and circles and networks of power grow impervious to external needs and demands, they are led to dismiss negotiation and resort to systematic, random repression. Similarly, contentious politics becomes hidden, oblivious to deliberative interactions, and in its turn widens the range of its targets randomly. While the dangers posed by the radicalization of democracy have been briefly expounded, those posed by the radicalization of the other may materialize in atrocities which exceed those we have so far witnessed. This is because the types of networks being set up are based on weak links between central organizations and independent cells, so that violent acts become hard to control in terms of typology and intensity. This happens when affiliation is open, leaving to every component the opportunity to open up participation even more to allies and accomplices who are further and further removed from the core organization. Strong ties characterize limited affiliation, whereas the 'strength of weak ties' will cause a widening of the network and produce unpredictable human costs (Granovetter, 1973; 1982).

The revitalization of social movements could reverse this trend. It would raise the density of communication among individuals and groups, leading to the development of cosmopolitan identities (Della Porta, 2013). Most social movements are averse to organized violence, be this exercised by state or non-state agents, and even when expressing themselves through 'tumults', as Machiavelli contended, they can bring social change, fight corruption and benefit democracy. To avoid unwarranted optimism, however, a short final discussion of deliberative democracy and its practices, mentioned above, is in order.

Advocates of this school of thought claim that political decisions should be the outcome of fair and reasonable discussion among citizens, who have the opportunity to exchange arguments and consider different views aimed at improving the public good. Conversation, therefore, is meant to establish actions and procedures, bring agreement on the decisions to make and, simultaneously, strengthen democracy through collective participation. The legitimacy of democratic political decisions rests on such collective participation, which includes 'contained' as well as 'transgressive' social movements (see above). Decisions, in their turn, are not the aggregate of competing pre-established interests, but the result of contrasting opinions formed through discussion. With respect to individual and collective decision-making, in sum, deliberative democracy shifts the emphasis from the outcome of the decision to the quality of the process leading to it. Discussion should be public and communication clear, as the early proponents of this model would stress (Rawls, 1972; Habermas, 1984), and even if the process does not produce consensus, the remaining differences and the possibility of discussing them further will still enhance democracy.

Looking critically at this theory, it could be contended that only skilled individuals and groups may be capable of making reasonable arguments and shape them in stylistically approved fashion. Further, deliberation assumes that participants in a dialogue are rational, cooperative, and that their arguments are persuasive and unifying, a circumstance that may leave out the majority of citizens. Social biases and structural inequalities determine, after all, such skills. The deliberation model, moreover, leaves aside the role played by passions and collective forms of identification in the field of politics.

A more realistic model of deliberative democracy would posit conflict as a permanent feature of social systems and encourage constant mobilization, a never-ending process towards tolerance and equality. This type of 'agonistic pluralism' (Mouffe, 2013) acknowledges that power is constitutive of social relations and that the political order is the expression of a specific hegemony. Agonistic pluralism forges identities in a precarious and always vulnerable terrain, as it takes place in 'the political', namely an arena that reflects the antagonism inherent in human relations. This type of deliberative democracy assumes not the existence of 'enemies', but 'adversaries', somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend them we do not put into question (ibid).

Radicalized democracies strive to turn all dissent into the radicalized other, while dissent has an opposite goal, that of distancing itself from terror, including state terror. In this sense, states fighting the radicalization of the other should promote and, while doing so, encourage the revitalization and growth of social movements.

Conclusion

Recurring, and perhaps unfounded, complaints are heard that criminologists have shunned the analysis of terrorism (Ruggiero, 2006; Freilich and LaFree, 2015). One should question, rather, whether criminological categories themselves are fungible for the issue at hand. This paper has proposed an analysis of political extremism that falls outside the canonical realm of criminology, starting with the simultaneous examination of the radicalization of democracy and the radicalization of the other. After highlighting the imitative dynamic that links institutional and anti-institutional violence, it has contended that the interaction between the two types of radicalization affects not only the intensity of the violence waged, but also the very structure of the two radicalized parties. The systematic repression of dissent, it has been argued, tends to turn all critical actors into terrorists, while social movements are likely to isolate the terrorist element within a society that they nevertheless combat. A specific form of deliberative democracy has been advocated, one that assumes the existence of conflict, inequality, injustice and, hence, antagonism while pursuing dialogue and conversation.

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